

ALABAMA **ARTS**

Volume XXVIII, Number 1

State Arts Awards Issue 2019



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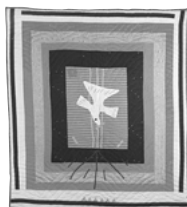
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On the Front Cover: Yvonne Wells (American, born 1939), *Dove Descending*, 1993, cotton, cotton/polyester blend, rayon, and plastic button, 57 x 51 1/2 inches, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, Alabama, Association Purchase, 2004.21.24

On the Back Cover: Yvonne Wells (American, born 1939), *Shout Hallelujah*, 1999, cotton, cotton/polyester blend, and satin, 41 x 64 inches, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, Alabama, Association Purchase, 2004.21.29



The Alabama State
Council on the Arts

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Celebration Of the Arts



2019

ARTS AWARDS 2019

CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING ARTISTS, ARTS PATRONS, ARTS LEADERS & VISIONARIES

by Dr. Elliot Knight

Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts

Alabama is currently celebrating the Bicentennial of its statehood. Creative and artistic opportunities abound statewide that are allowing citizens an opportunity to experience and explore what makes our state great. From the Shoals to the shores, happenings and events have been held—and are planned—in all 67 counties highlighting our 200-year history and those important individuals who charted the course before us.

On December 14, 2019 we will mark the culmination of a three-year period of education and celebration that has led up to the Bicentennial of Alabama's statehood. Hundreds of thousands of Alabamians will have engaged with Alabama history and culture through the arts—learning about the past, reflecting on the present, and imagining our shared future.

Also, in celebration of the state's Bicentennial, *Alabama Creates: 200 Years of Art and Artists* will be published by the University of Alabama Press in July. The book features dozens of Alabama's most accomplished, noteworthy, and influential visual artists from 1819 to the present. The book highlights a broad spectrum of artists who worked in the state, from its early days to its current and contemporary scene, exhibiting a breadth of Alabama art. However, the book is not an encyclopedia but is a sampling of the multitudes of fine artists who have added richness to our society through their artistic and creative contributions.

Every other year the Alabama State Council on the Arts shines a spotlight on a select few exceptional Alabamians in what has become known as the Celebration of the Arts awards program. This year ASCA will be presenting awards to: Martha Reeves, a Motown recording legend; Jim and Elmore Inscoe, life-long patrons of the arts; Frye Gaillard, an acclaimed and prolific author; Kyes Stevens, an educator/poet/prison

arts innovator; Yvonne Wells, a story quilt-maker; Mayor Tommy Battle, a visionary mayor; and Sudha Raghuram, an Indian classical dancer and teacher.

A primary goal of ASCA since it was established in 1967 is to increase public recognition for the arts and artists in Alabama. The Celebration of the Arts awards program has proven to be one of our most effective and successful ways of achieving that goal. The only downside to the awards program is the impossible task of spotlighting all the individuals worthy of recognition.

The 2019 awards program will include honorees, performing artists, special guests and many friends of the arts from around the state. We hope this event will remind us all of the importance of supporting, appreciating and celebrating the contributions of special individuals that make the arts a vital part of our lives and community! Although we only recognize these contributions every other year, the development and continuation of high-quality arts experiences and institutions require support, dedication, and hard work year-round.

Our recipients reflect the breadth and richness of creativity, commitment, generosity and leadership that make the arts possible every day in Alabama. This showcase gives us an opportunity to express our appreciation and respect for their accomplishments, talents and contributions to Alabama and the world. The individuals we recognize here give us many reasons to be proud of our state. Thank you for sharing your gifts with us and with the world and thank you to all the other arts advocates and supporters who contribute daily to making our communities and state a better place to call home.



THE JONNIE DEE RILEY LITTLE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Jim and Elmore Inscoe

A Mix of Gardens, Flowers, and the Arts

by Al Head



Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

The Inscoes enjoying early garden blooms.

When looking at the evolution and growth of the arts in Alabama and in particular the Montgomery River Region, considerable recognition has to be given to Elmore and Jim Inscoe. For the best part of five decades the couple has supported, sponsored, hosted and provided leadership to a wide range of arts activities. There are those who remember the Inscoes' important role in presenting summer musicals at Jasmine Hill Gardens and Amphitheatre. There are those who will remember their leadership on boards of arts organizations as well as state and regional arts agencies.



Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

A group of students visit Jasmine Hill Gardens as they study the Ancient Olympic Games.

State and city officials remember their contributions to a unique cultural exchange with Pietrasanta, Italy. Still others remember and appreciate Jim and Elmore's support to new arts groups like ClefWorks in the early years of taking root in Montgomery. And then there is their stewardship of Jasmine Hill Gardens and Museum of Greek culture. Jasmine Hill is a unique example of landscape architecture, horticultural design and historical statuary curated and preserved by the Inscoes. A history of the Inscoes' contributions to the arts is broad and impressive, but such a listing would not even begin to include numerous gestures of support to the arts and artists done behind the scenes and anonymously. A State Council on the Arts' tribute and spotlight on the Inscoes for many years of support to the arts is appropriate and reflects the spirit of ASCA's awards program so well. Space and time will allow for only a few highlights of their impact on the cultural landscape of Alabama.

Perhaps it was 1971 when Jim and Elmore purchased Jasmine Hill Gardens when a shared life



Jim Inscoe interacting with students.

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

A reproduction of Discus Thrower. The original is in the British Museum.

of involvement in the arts began. Elmore, with a family legacy connected to the famous Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile, clearly had an early attraction to landscape design, the native flora and fauna of Alabama and the beauty and magic of flowers. Jim, a man of many interests and talents, combined

with an abundance of energy, was a perfect partner for a life of cultural adventures and support of the arts. Jasmine Hill became a venue for not only showcasing an amazing garden, but also a space for the presentation of summer musicals at the amphitheater, open air chamber music concerts, artist studios, a dramatic backdrop for Greek sculpture, and a River Region location for fostering international cultural exchange. A highlight of international emphasis, Jasmine Hill appropriately became a host sight for the flame in transit to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

In 1984, Jim Inscoe was appointed by Governor George C. Wallace for a six-year term on the Alabama State Council on the Arts where he served as Chairman from 1987-1989. In that capacity, he represented Alabama on the Southern Arts Federation Board and was the Alabama chair-delegate at the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies annual conferences. His leadership on the Alabama



Elmore admiring her blooming garden.

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

Photo: Courtesy of Barbara Reed and ASCA



Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Alabama State Council on the Arts: (Left to right) Council member Elaine Johnson, Elmore Inscoe, Jim Inscoe and Dora James in June 2016.

Photo: Courtesy of Barbara Reed and ASCA



Elmore and Jim join Judy and Al Head at the 50th Anniversary of the Alabama State Council on the Arts in June 2016.

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



The Inscoe family at the 1987 University of Alabama Fine Arts Award ceremony. (Left to right) University of Alabama president, Joab Thomas, Turner Inscoe, Elmore Inscoe (Elmore DeMott), Elmore Inscoe, Allison Inscoe (Allison Chandler) and Jim Inscoe.

State Council on the Arts and with national and regional arts organizations was widely viewed as outstanding. Elmore attended most council meetings, participating in social functions where she not only became friends with the other fourteen members but a partner in promoting the arts. Old friends and fond memories were reunited at the Council's 50th Anniversary celebration in 2016 and Jim was introduced as the oldest living member of the past chairman's club. The infamous story was shared of Jim bringing figs to meetings from Jasmine Hill where he would strategically place leaves for decoration on the board table.

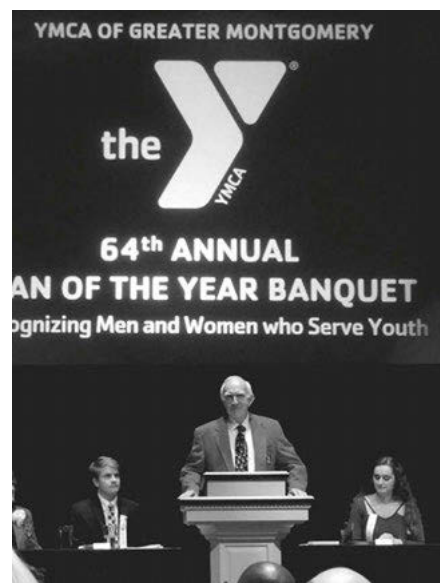


Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

Jim Inscoe receiving the YMCA Man of the Year Award in 2015.

The presiding chair was reminded by fellow members of the classical use of fig leaves on male statuary. Jim always cordially nodded and continued to bring more figs with attached leaves. As the Inscoe stories continued, the tale also surfaced of Elmore sacrificing a new hairdo to the

class-five Bull Sluice Rapid, while white water rafting on the Chattooga River prior to a Southern Arts Federation reception in Asheville, North Carolina. Fond memories of the old days almost always included the Inscoes.

Alabama's venture into a cultural exchange with Pietrasanta, Italy in 2006 predictably and appropriately included Jim and Elmore. Made possible through the Alabama artist Nall Hollis, the Alabama State Council on the Arts, Mayor Massimo Mallegni, and Commissioner of Culture Daniele Spina, Nall's large bronze Peace Frame was donated and dedicated as a symbol of friendship between Alabama and Pietrasanta. The small Italian city in Northwest Tuscany is arguably the sculpture capital of the world and the formal relationship with Alabama proved to be significant. An Alabama delegation including the Inscoes was on hand for the dedication and to set in motion planning for a full blown cultural exchange between Pietrasanta, Sylacauga, Montgomery and the State of Alabama. Of note, Elmore Inscoe was the first person to be carried through the Peace Frame in Pietrasanta by artist Nall. The event was one of great fanfare and opened the door for exciting collabora-

tion between artists, public officials, arts administrators and average citizens experiencing diverse cultures and forming close friendships. The Inscoes hosted wine receptions at Jasmine Hill and dinner for Italian artists and dignitaries at their home in the years to come. Demonstrating Southern hospitality was clearly part of showing off Alabama's culture, and the Inscoes were the kind of hosts who could certainly show off the best our state had to offer. The cultural exchange with Pietrasanta has continued and exceeds initial expectations thanks to people like Jim and Elmore.

The Inscoes' contributions to the arts in Montgomery, the River Region and Alabama run long and deep. Clearly older established arts groups and university programs have realized the impact of their generosity, but smaller, newer organizations such as ClefWorks in Montgomery, have benefited mightily from Jim and Elmore's moral and financial support. Reaching out to individual artists, national and international, has been another avenue of support the Inscoes have embraced over the years. That form of support has even included taking visiting Italian sculptors to Montgomery Biscuits baseball games.



Jim Inscoe and Al Head present Cheryl Carter with a Governor's Arts Award in 1989.

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama State Council on the Arts



Jim Inscoe (center) was Chair of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, 1987-1989. Frank Morring (far right) served as Chair 1989-1991. Elmore Inscoe and Roberta Gamble look on as the mantle is passed.

Photo: Courtesy of the Alabama State Council on the Arts

A love of the arts, flowers and family have certainly followed Jim and Elmore into their senior years of life. The proud parents of three children and six grandchildren, the Inscoes' have exhibited dedication, generosity and commitment to community service reflect a legacy that has been passed on and is recognized

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



Jim and Elmore at the 2016 Mother's Day Evening Garden Concert at Bellingrath Gardens and Home, Mobile. Mayor Sandy Stimpson and his wife, Jean join the couple.



Elmore DeMott and her mother, Elmore Bartlett Inscoe.

Photo: Courtesy of Elmore DeMott



Elmore Inscoe served on the Board of Trustees of the Bellingrath Morse Foundation. She is joined by Trustees: Steve Crawford, Dr. Bill Barrick, Carroll Blow, Preston Bolt and Ollie Delchamps.

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



Elmore leading children on a tour among the Greek architectural replicas in the gardens at Jasmine Hill.



A production of The Wizard of Oz at the Jasmine Hills Amphitheatre.

on many fronts. With this legacy in mind, it is appropriate to note a mother-daughter relationship that has become a special project for both the family and thousands of others who are dealing with health

issues. These issues and challenges call for new forms of communication and alternative celebrations of life that the arts can provide. Jim and Elmore's oldest daughter, Elmore DeMott, is an outstanding photog-



Children interacting with craftsmen at a Netherlands Festival at Jasmine Hill Gardens.

rapher who has exhibited her work in galleries throughout the South. As a response of love and support to her mother, Elmore initiated a project that came to be known as "Flowers for Mom." The visually

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



Elmore with school children preparing for a mock race celebrating the Ancient Olympic Games.

spectacular photographs tell a story, evoke fond memories, provide sunshine on otherwise cloudy days, reflect change in a positive light and open avenues for conversation that are near and dear to family and friends alike. "Flowers for Mom" has been and continues to be shared with a broad audience via social media, feature articles and gallery exhibitions. A special exhibition of "Flowers for Mom" at Bellingsrath Gardens was par-



Elmore sharing a moment of learning and laughter with students.

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

ticularly meaningful for the Inscoe family and appreciative visitors. The message and bridge of understanding conveyed through these photographs and exhibitions has touched thousands of others going through parallel phases of life and challenges with friends and family. Again and again the arts positively impact lives in many different ways and at different times. The Inscoes have reflected that impact consistently throughout their lives.

So, the Johnnie Dee Riley

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



WorldFest at Jasmine Hill Gardens.



Greek dancers at WorldFest.

Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family



Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

(Above) A sampling of the numerous statues in the gardens at Jasmine Hill.

(Left) Jim & Elmore Inscoe with grandchildren at Temple of Hera in Greece.



Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

Sharing a laugh together.

Little Lifetime Achievement Award for 2019 justifiably spotlights not one person, but a couple, Jim and Elmore Inscoe. This couple has supported the arts, promoted a better cultural climate for all Alabamians and together have lived arts-rich lives as an inspiration to so many. The State Council on the Arts and the arts community of Alabama extend congratulations and appreciation to this remarkable couple and their entire family.

*Al Head is the former
Executive Director of the
Alabama State Council on the Arts.*



Photo: Courtesy of the Inscoe family

An Inscoe family photo.

THE DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD

Martha Reeves

All We Need is Music

by Burgin Mathews

Everyone knows the song. A drumroll launches a propulsive rhythm. There's a funky bass line, a fanfare of horns, a relentless tambourine—and then that voice, deep and forceful, soulful, authoritative, and joyous.

“Calling out around the world,” Martha Reeves proclaims: “are you ready for a brand new beat?”

“Summer’s here and the time is right for dancing in the street.”

Released in 1964, the song was “an invitation, across the nation.” It was a celebration, and a hit. Some even saw it as a call to arms. “Dancing in the Street” defined its era, but half a century later it still breathes with life. For Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, it belongs to a run of unstoppable Motown hits, a catalogue of classics that also includes “Nowhere to Run,” “(Love is Like a) Heatwave,” “Jimmy Mack,” and others.

Reeves was born in Eufaula, but her family moved to Detroit before her first birthday, joining the tide of African American southerners who made the Great Migration north. The family settled in Detroit in 1942,

but like many other families kept one foot in the South: Martha spent her summers in Alabama, soaking up what she calls the “country life.” It was a life of barefoot days and downhome cooking: sweet potatoes raked over hot coals,

big cakes of cornbread, and all-day, slow-cooked stews. But Reeves also remembers, on those train rides South, having to get up and move to the “colored” cars in back, once they crossed the Mason-Dixon line. It was an education in injustice that stuck with her.

The family had brought up from Alabama a deep love for music, and Martha, the third of twelve children, grew up immersed in song. Music was embedded in stories of her parents’ courtship: her father Elijah had once come calling with his guitar and played for Reeves’s mother, Ruby, on the porch of her family’s Abbeville home. Later, as Martha grew up, he’d serenade her

too, with “Good Evening, Little Schoolgirl” and other blues tunes. Her mother worshipped Billie Holiday and as she combed Martha’s hair, she’d sing to her, whispering a world of “lovely lyrics” into the young girl’s ears.



Photo: Courtesy of Martha Reeves

Martha Reeves and the Vandellas were inducted into the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame in 1995.



Martha's grandfather, a Methodist minister, started a Detroit church, and her family made up a good chunk of its choir. Martha was only three when she and two brothers won a prize of chocolate-covered cherries, singing in the church talent show. That performance also won her her first applause.

Detroit was brimming with inspirations. A teenaged Aretha Franklin, a few months Martha's junior, sang her new record, "Never Grow Old," at Martha's grandfather's church. Sometimes Reeves saw Little Willie John, who scored a hit with "Fever" in 1956, singing in front of the candy store across the street from her home. At school, she sang in the glee club and choir, and after school students congregated in a park across the street, singing doo-wop. After graduation, she joined a couple of groups, the Sabre-Ettes and the Fascinations, before starting the Del-Phis with some friends.

Reeves was singing in a nightclub when Mickey Stevenson, a Motown executive, invited her to drop by his office and audition. She arrived to find there were no immediate auditions being held—so she made herself useful as Stevenson's secretary, answering phones and handling papers. Sometimes she'd be pulled into the



A signed publicity photo of Martha, Annett and Rosalind.

Photo: Courtesy of Martha Reeves



Martha lounging.

studio to clap, stomp, or sing back-up on somebody else's record. She brought the Del-Phis around, and they sang behind Marvin Gaye on his earliest hits. But their biggest break came one day when singer Mary Wells failed to show up for a session. The band was ready to record, but union rules required a singer—so, on the spot, Martha wound up behind the mic. The results impressed Motown head Berry Gordy, and Martha Reeves—and the Vandellas, as the Del-Phis rebranded themselves—became



Photo: Courtesy of Martha Reeves

A signed publicity photo of Martha, Annett, and Rosalind in their green satin gold lamé costumes.

sensations. (Reeves cobbled together the group's new name from a couple of sources: "Della" was a nod to Della Reese, a vocalist Reeves adored. "Van" signified Van Dyke Street, the central artery of Detroit's East Side, where Martha lived.)

Soon the group was one of Motown's biggest acts. As lead vocalist, Reeves carved out a sound that was grittier and gutsier than most Motown acts; she became

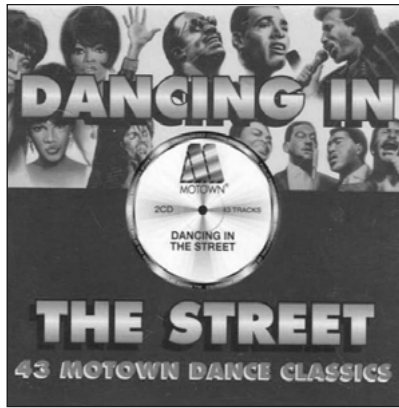
the soulful, downhome counterpoint to Motown's other leading diva, the glamorous sophisticate, Diana Ross. There was more of the church in Reeves's singing—and more, perhaps, of those Alabama summers.

When Reeves went back South now, it was with Motown's Motor City Revue, an entourage that also included Gaye, Wells, Little Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, the Marvellettes, and more. In 1962, on a marathon of ninety-four one-night stands, they found themselves traveling through the heart of the country's civil rights turmoil. Unlike most of her bus-mates, Reeves was already accustomed to the insults of travel down South—she knew about entering restaurants through the back door, to pay for cold hot dogs and cold hot chocolate, about using the bathroom in the bushes, when gas stations turned away black travelers—but conditions now were worse than ever. In Birmingham, the group was mistaken for Freedom Riders, and at Mississippi gas station, they were turned away by a double-barreled shotgun. Reeves remembers performing in front of a



Martha Reeves and the Vandellas performing in a nightclub.

Photo: Courtesy of Martha Reeves



Confederate flag to a segregated audience, split down the middle by race. But she also witnessed the ways music broke down barriers. “Once the show got involved,” she told WGBH public media, “everybody forgot their hatred, and Motown’s music made a marriage.” Black and white danced together, oblivious to boundaries. “The prejudice



Motown's 45th Anniversary Celebration.

Photo: Courtesy of Dundee Holt, Ideal Entertainment, Inc.

and the hatred was forgotten,” Reeves said, “at least during showtime.”

Again and again, Reeves’s music became emblematic of something deeper in the culture. In “Jimmy Mack,” Reeves begged a boyfriend to come home before she caved to a new suitor’s seductions; but the song’s “When are you coming back?” refrain took on new meaning in the era of Vietnam. Another record, “I Should Be Proud,” *did* address the war, head-on, with Reeves declaring of a fallen lover, “Johnny didn’t die for me—he was fighting for the evils of society.” Radio stations banned the song, Motown buried it, and Reeves ended up on the C.I.A.’s watch list.

But it was “Dancing in the Street” that struck the deepest chord. One day Reeves sat in the studio, gazing at Marvin Gaye as he rehearsed the song for his own recording. Seeing her eye him, Gaye said, “Let’s try this song on Martha.” She adapted the melody to suit her voice and sang it through once. The second time she sang it, the tape was rolling. After that, the song was hers.

Reeves has always insisted the song was just about having a good time—swinging and swaying and records playing—but its “brand new beat” resonated with a changing world. Leaders of the Black Power movement embraced it as call to cultural revolution. And when Detroit and other cities roll-called in the lyrics gave way to riots, many saw the song as an anthem of upheaval.

Really, Reeves says, it was a party song. But in other ways, the Vandellas “were always political. We sold love in front of segregated audiences,” she told writer Mark Kurlansky. “That’s political.”

Both as soloist and



A 1965 promo poster.



Martha Reeves performing at the 1995 Alabama Music Hall of Fame induction banquet and awards show, Alabama Department of Archives and History. Image donated by Alabama Media Group.

Photo: Alan Warren, Huntsville Times.



Martha Reeves arriving at the 1995 Alabama Music Hall of Fame induction banquet and awards show, Alabama Department of Archives and History.



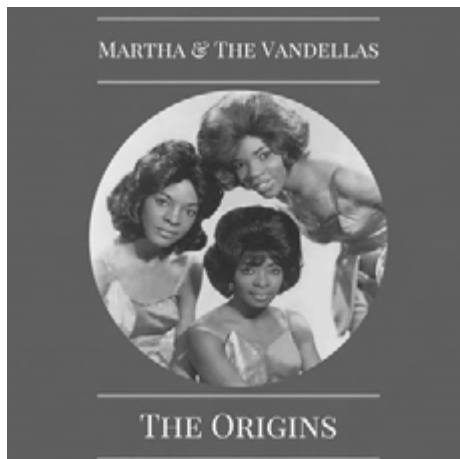
Martha with Barry Gordy and Stevie Wonder.



Martha Reeves receiving the trophy during her induction into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in 1995, Alabama Department of Archives and History.

with the Vandellas, Reeves has continued a long and productive career since Motown's heyday. She's released solo albums and starred in stage shows, including the musical, *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Her records have become staples of film and television. In 1995, Reeves was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In 2006, "Dancing in the Street" was added to the Smithsonian's National Recording Registry. In 2012, Reeves was back on the Billboard charts with "I'm Not Leaving," a Top 25 hit. Throughout, she's kept up an active schedule of tours, most recently with 2018's "Legendary Ladies of Motown." This year she and the Vandellas are performing dates around the world in celebration of Motown's 60th anniversary.

Even when other artists of her generation left



Detroit, Reeves stayed on, eventually serving on the City Council. She's remained tied to the "country" roots that helped shape her. A daughter of Alabama and the Motor City, Martha Reeves has made music that has helped define the soul and spirit of America—and she continues to inspire all those who accept her infectious invitation to dance.



Image donated by Alabama Media Group. Photo: Patricia Miklik, Huntsville Times.

Martha Reeves and Dennis Edwards at the 1999 Alabama Music Hall of Fame induction banquet and awards show, Alabama Department of Archives and History.



Photo: Courtesy of Martha Reeves

Martha getting a hug from Barry Gordy of Motown.

*Burgin Mathews is a writer, teacher
and radio host in Birmingham, Alabama.*

*His weekly radio show, The Lost Child, features
a wide range of downhome roots music: classic country,
southern soul, rhythm and blues, rockabilly, gospel,
old-time fiddling, and more. His book Doc: The Story of a
Birmingham Jazz Man is available from the
University of Alabama Press.*



Photo: Courtesy of Martha Reeves

Martha Reeves with fellow recording artist, Eddie Floyd.



THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Frye Gaillard

A Lifetime of Writing About Civil Rights

by Roy Hoffman

Although Frye Gaillard is among the South's most accomplished and prolific authors—his new memoir of the 1960s, “A Hard Rain,” his 26th book, clocks in at 673 pages—in person he is not only gracious but humble. With forebears who were antebellum planters in South Carolina, and a grandfather and father who were distinguished lawyers in Mobile, his courtly manner comes by tradition, it seems. But his genteel presence—a tall, eloquent professor and grandfather—belies a fierce determination to address society's ills.

“For those of us who grew up with privilege,” Gaillard says, “there's a lot about social justice that we need to care about.”

Since his first book 40 years ago, Gaillard, 72, has borne out this conviction. “I'm fascinated by people who stand for justice and progress,” he explains, “what Lincoln called ‘our better angels.’”

He's shone light on those better angels—and our nation's contrasting “dark side,” he calls it, resurgent



Photo: Rachel Smook

Gaillard at Ft. Sumter.

again, he fears—through an array of genres.

In 2004, after a career with the Charlotte (N.C.) Observer, Gaillard returned to Mobile with his wife, Nancy, a career educator, settling into a house on Fowl River and publication of “Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America,” a heralded civil rights history.

At age 60, rather than put his feet up and watch the lazy river, he pressed on. Named “Writer In Residence,” at University of South Alabama, a role that “reenergized” him, he produced a book of essays on music, race and politics, “With Music and Justice For All;” a reader's memoir, “The Books That Mattered;” and co-authored “In the Path of the Storms,” about coastal Bayou La Batre with its seafood, hurricanes, and old-timers alongside new Southeast Asian refugees, then narrated a documentary by Mike Letcher of that title.



Gaillard at Wilderness cannon.

Photo: Film still, Dragonfly Public Media

After a children's story about an escaped slave, "Go South to Freedom," he took a soul-searching trip through the letters of ancestors who fought for the Confederacy. This "nimble parsing of memory and myth," wrote USA professor Steven Trout in the foreword to "Journey to the Wilderness," results in Gaillard's discovering "that little...fits the Lost Cause version of history that he inherited, like family china, from his Southern elders."

A Mike Letcher documentary, inspired by the book and detailing Gaillard's literary career, has aired on Alabama Public Television and far beyond.

Gaillard says that "Journey to the Wilderness," like "Cradle of Freedom" and his newest, "A Hard Rain," is "popular history," meant to engage the reader with the sweep of story and high drama, often with a personal viewpoint. "I want to write not only about what happened," he explains, "but how it felt."

But for all his outpouring of print, Gaillard is more than an artist in the garret.

"Through his books and other writings, classroom discussions and public lectures, Frye inspires students and citizens alike with his authentic commitment to social justice issues and a personal knowledge that brings



Photo: Film still, Dragonfly Public Media

Gaillard's Lillian Smith award for his book, *Cradle of Freedom*.

these historical topics to life," says University of South Alabama president Tony Waldrop. Fittingly, Gaillard was USA's Fall 2019 commencement speaker.

In this role of public intellectual, Gaillard travels the state and beyond, visiting schools, sitting on panels, reflecting on topics from voting rights to the Vietnam War. He's engaged in dialogues on religion, too, and its mandate,

from his perspective, for social action. He's written a profile of the late civil rights preacher Will D. Campbell, a biography, "Prophet from Plains: Jimmy Carter and His Legacy," and a preface to "The Poetry of Faith," a collection of sermons of the Rev. Stephen F. Dill, former pastor of Mobile's Dauphin Way Methodist.

Gaillard's guided, he says, by Jesus's "Sermon on the Mount," with its emphasis on compassion and service to others, and lines from the Book of Amos—"Let justice roll down like a river, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

* * *

Two figures in particular have captivated Gaillard since his early years—Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. Not only do King and Kennedy embody Gaillard's belief that America is a land of hope versus



Photo: Film still, Dragonfly Public Media

Gaillard at Gettysburg.

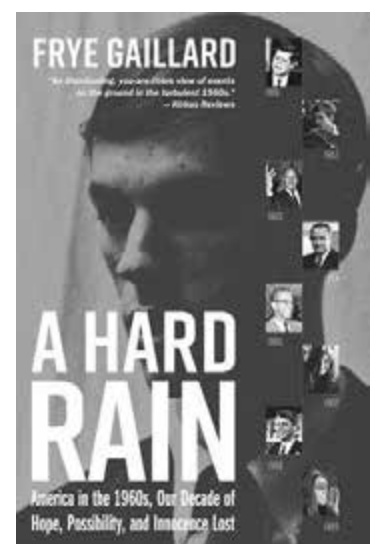


Photo: Courtesy of NewSouth Books

A remembrance of a transcendent era.



Gaillard with Robert Kennedy. Image from Mobile Bay magazine article by Roy Hoffman, July 2018.



Photo: Courtesy of Vanderbilt University archive

Gaillard with William F. Buckley and Julian Bond.

tragedy, optimism versus despair, but he had brief—yet deeply moving—experiences with both.

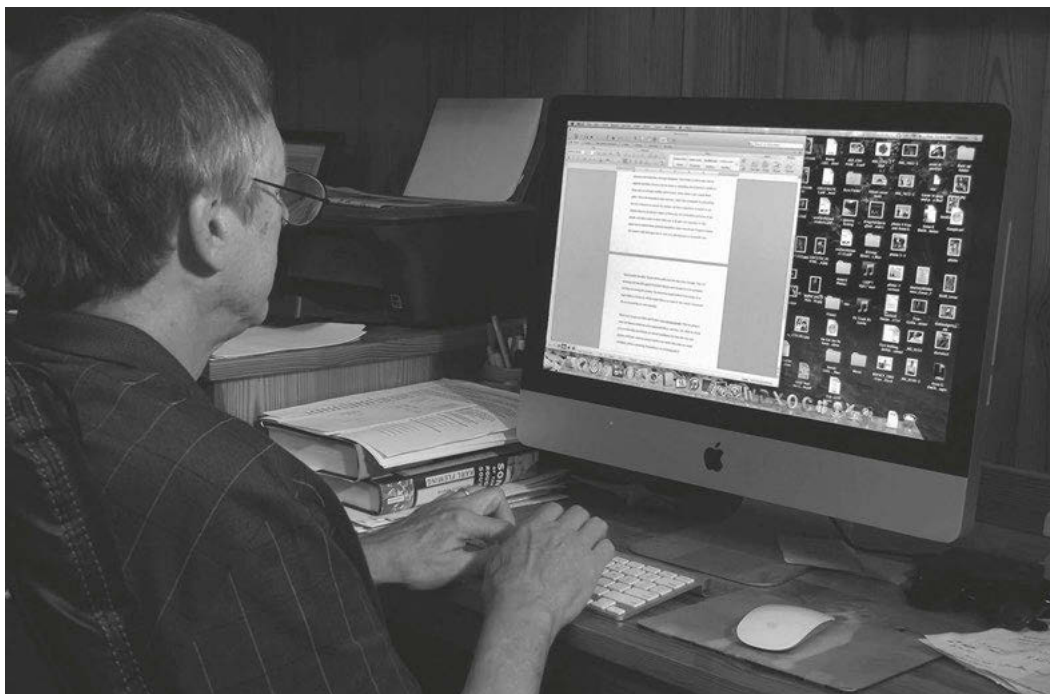
When he was 16, on a trip to Birmingham, he was within a few feet of King who was being arrested. “I couldn’t get that image out of my mind. The dignity of Dr. King, the sadness in his eyes as he was being roughly hauled off to jail. I couldn’t escape the question, ‘What’s going on here?’”

That question became a catalyst for a lifetime of writing about civil rights.

At Vanderbilt his senior year, 1968, he headed up the campus speaker’s program. It was a turbulent time—the Vietnam War was raging, there were protests and sit-ins—and that spring Gaillard invited Bobby Kennedy as guest speaker.

“I’ve never seen such joy, passion, and urgency in a crowd,” he recalls of Kennedy’s presentation. When Kennedy was driven back to the airport, Gaillard was able to visit with his new hero as the two rode together in the back seat of the car.

The assassination of that hero on June 5, 1968,



Gaillard writing at his desk.



Photo: Rachel Smook

Gaillard at Ft. Sumter.

not only devastated Gaillard—"it was overwhelming," he says—but left him with a scene that stays deep in his heart.

After shots were fired and Kennedy fell, Gaillard recounts, a 17-year-old busboy at the Ambassador Hotel, Juan Romero, an immigrant from Mexico, cradled Kennedy in his arms, "to protect his head from the cold concrete," as Romero has said.

Gaillard recalls that Kennedy, still conscious, asked Romero, "Is everybody ok?"

That image, Gaillard says of the violence, tenderness, and selflessness of that moment meant, as he puts it, he "had to write" "A Hard Rain."

* * *

Endorsements for the book poured in from famous Alabamians: Howell Raines, former executive editor of



Photo: Film still, Dragonfly Public Media

Gaillard, production still, Journey to the Wilderness.

the New York Times and a Pulitzer Prize recipient, offered admiration: "A child of the Sixties and one of the leading civil rights reporters of his generation, Frye Gaillard has given us a riveting tour along what he calls the fine line between history and journalism."

Another Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Cynthia Tucker, praised the book as "a deeply personal story...of a young man grappling with our nation's dark history and seeking to propel it toward a more promising future."

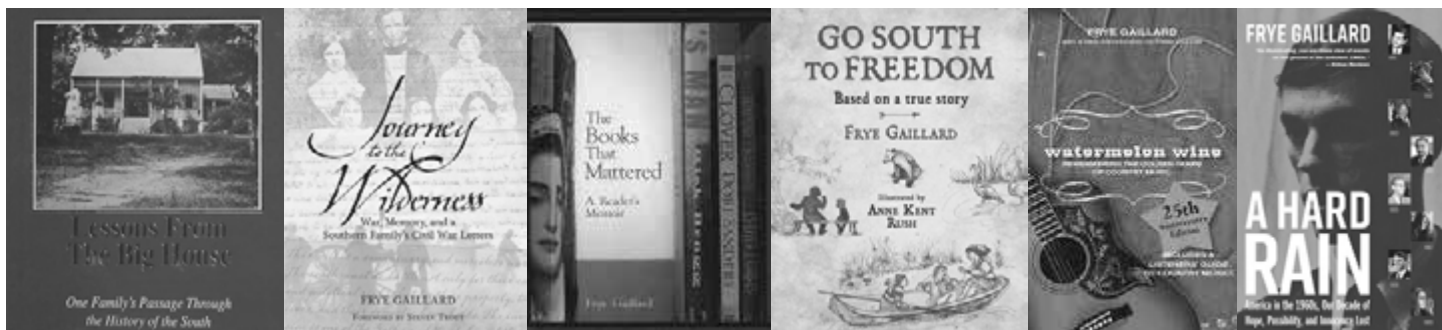
Novelist Sena Jeter Naslund, who received a 2011 Governor's Arts Award, stated: "Gaillard takes us there and makes it all so real that we forget we're reading."

Published by NewSouth Books in Montgomery, headed up by Randall Williams and Suzanne LaRosa, "A Hard Rain" suggests its breadth with the book cover. The title, from a Bob Dylan song, is superimposed over a photo of young Frye, next to small portraits of



Photo: Film still, Dragonfly Public Media

Gaillard at the Center for Study of War & Memory, University of South Alabama.



John Kennedy, Malcolm X, Janis Joplin, Dylan, Gloria Steinam, James Baldwin, King and Bobby Kennedy—an indication of the hundreds of figures from America’s tumultuous 1960s who are part of this monumental work.

The invention of the Pill, NASA’s first space expeditions, nuclear bomb scares, gay rights, baseball and literature and soul music and the Supreme Court—these and a cavalcade of other events unfolding across a decade, with 72 chapters arranged chronologically, make “A Hard Rain” Gaillard’s “most ambitious book,” as he acknowledges.

The work has also proven his most visible, with author appearances, in addition to Southern venues, from Berkeley to Brown University, from Manhattan’s 92nd St. Y literary stage to Washington D.C.’s Newseum, in a year of career recognition, too, including the prestigious Alabama Governor’s Arts Award.

The story of this book has been profoundly emotional for a personal reason, as well. The challenge of writing was less daunting, and lonely, given his wife’s encouragement, her affirmation. Nancy Gaillard read every word as he produced portions of “A Hard Rain” up through the final galleys. A few years before, Frye had

cheered her on when, at age 67 and a professor of education at USA, she completed her doctorate in education from University of Alabama, a crowning achievement to a lifetime of teaching and mentoring. Now it was Nancy’s turn to champion him.

There was to be what he calls, though, “a wrenching juxtaposition.”

After a long illness Nancy passed away on July 27, 2018. Three days later the first copies of “A Hard Rain” arrived. Its dedication page reads: “For Nancy with love... For sharing this journey and all the others.”

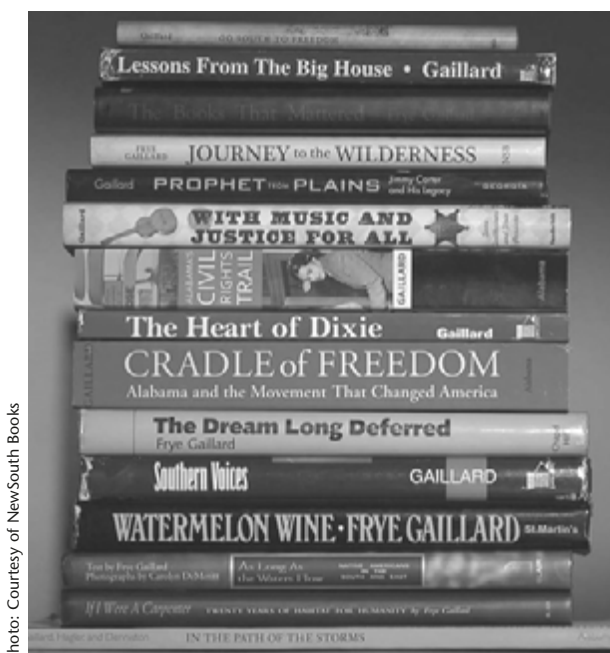
“Her role in this book,” he says, “was a microcosm of her role in my life—loving and generous. I cannot emphasize enough my gratitude. Nancy’s love shines through this book in many ways.”

Having rooted back home in his 60s, and now in a new phase of life in his 70s, perhaps the time has come,

finally, for Gaillard to call it a day. The porch, the river, the grandkids—there are many allures.

Put the rocking chair away, though.

He’s already talking about new projects, new works needing to be written, and is eager to get going again.



A sampling of books written by Gaillard.



Photo: Film still, Dragonfly Public Media



The Gaillard home on Fowl River.

Photo: Gaillard family photo



Gaillard with daughters Tracy & Rachel, and late wife Nancy.

Roy Hoffman is author of the novels Come Landfall, Chicken Dreaming Corn, and Almost Family: 35th Anniversary Edition, and the nonfiction books Back Home: Journeys Through Mobile, and Alabama Afternoons: Profiles and Conversations. On the web: www.royhoffmanwriter.com



Franklin Gaillard and family.

Photo: Gaillard family photo



Gaillard with his parents, Walter and Helen Amante Gaillard.

Photo: Gaillard family photo

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Kyes Stevens

Cultivating Equity and Access to Arts & Education

by Barb Bondy

"...I believe unwaveringly in the capacity of human beings to flourish through arts and humanities, through access to meaningful education. All human beings. Every single one, no matter race, age, location, personal beliefs, personal action—I believe it is a human right."

Kyes Stevens, Commencement Address, Sarah Lawrence College, 2017

Kyes Stevens is a poet, and founder and director of the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project (APAEP), a program that is a national leader in providing quality arts and educational opportunities for people who are incarcerated in Alabama. APAEP is housed in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction at Auburn University.

"The core of APAEP is creating spaces for people to learn," says Stevens who has presented at many national and international conferences and symposia and has conducted multiple televised and radio interviews about APAEP. "We invest in each other, with the understanding that we build the world we want by creating avenues for learning, and fostering a ripple effect, that one path leads to another and then another. We believe in opening doors," says Stevens. "People want to learn, period. Teach them, period. It actually does not have to be more complicated than that."

APAEP is a remarkable story of the power of one individual, one poet, who has over 18 years, relent-

lessly pursued a vision for access to arts and education for those who historically have had none, including building a Bachelor of Science degree available in the Alabama Department of Corrections. "Working together, we strengthen our foundation, we broaden our scope, and we provide space for more people to fall in love with learning," says Stevens.

The scope of Stevens' life is an integration of passions: writing poetry, founding and directing APAEP,



Stevens by a mural painted by APAEP students inside Staton Correctional Facility, Elmore, Alabama.

Photo: Courtesy of APAEP



A student drafting a poem. Stevens teaches poetry and writing classes for APAEP.



APAEP arts and education classes are offered at men's and women's facilities in Alabama.

photographing the rural south, rescuing animals, working with troubled youth, serving as a volunteer firefighter, a town council member, an activist, and tending to her small farm, gardens, and creatures. "I see the world as a poet," says Stevens, "This has a profound effect on me."

Compassion and empathy are reflexive, fundamental aspirations for Stevens whose life work, in all endeavors, eases the suffering of others, cultivates hope, particularly in prisons where there is none, and develops potential and self-worth in those who are neglected and marginal-



Stevens with a cohort of Auburn students who are working toward a B.S. degree.



Stevens teaches an APAEP poetry class.

ized. “I cannot imagine what direction my life would have taken at Tutwiler, surrounded by nothingness if it were not for Kyes and APAEP,” states Sonia, a former APAEP student.”

Compassion, empathy, and insight are reflected in Stevens’ poetry and are at the core of APAEP’s goal to offer the opportunity to incarcerated people in Alabama to see themselves as students, to learn, to reflect, to thrive with access to arts and education. “Kyes gave me the gift of words,” adds Sonia. “Words that allowed me to focus, remember who I was as a person and most importantly know that incarceration does not dictate less than, but a journey that allows for growth and education, with the end result of becoming a better person.”

The Man Who Planted Trees, a short story with particular significance to Stevens’ in her youth, mirrors to an observer the defining achievements of Kyes Stevens. The book, given to her by her mother in 1987, is an allegorical story about one man’s single-handed, life-long effort to successfully reforest a desolate valley. Stevens reflects on the story: “It begins with the ability to see the present, but also to see endlessly

beyond... This is how to create cultural and institutional change, says Stevens. “To see today and to imagine five generations from now, to believe in more than you can know and, to act on that belief.”

Kyes Stevens grew up in the rural town of Waverly, Alabama (pop. 145). She spent most of her spare time fishing, and hiking and roaming in the woods looking for rocks and minerals, trilliums, wild ginger plants and arrowheads. “I think my entire life is about seeing—



APAEP offers art classes in various mediums.

learning how to see and not see the lines that divide,” says Stevens, who now spends much of her time in Alabama and Georgia with her wife Lisa Oberlander.

Like her two grandmothers, Stevens clear-sightedly pursued an education. She earned a B.A. in English at Auburn University (1994). Like the “long line of very strong women” in her family, Stevens persisted in seeking advanced education traveling to New York to earn an M.A. in Women’s History and M.F.A. in Poetry from Sarah Lawrence College. With poetry at the forefront of her life, Stevens was awarded the inaugural Lillian E. Smith Writer-In-Service Award in 2011 and has completed seven writing residencies at the Lillian E. Smith Center for Creative Arts. Stevens received a Literary Arts Fellowship in 2014 from the Alabama State



Photo: Courtesy of APAEP

Stevens in discussion with Auburn students earning a B.S. degree.

Council on the Arts. Her poetry has appeared in several journals including the *Blue Collar Review*, *CrossRoads: A Southern Journal of Culture*, *Fishhouse.org* and the *Southern Women’s Review* among others.

Stevens is the only individual in the United



Photo: Courtesy of APAEP

APAEP provides focused workshops and semester-long classes in visual and literary arts.

Photo: Courtesy of Kyes Stevens



Stevens' artistic practice encompasses poetry and photographing the rural south.

States who served on strategic planning teams both in higher education and the arts with the goal of building national organizations to support higher education in prison programs and arts in corrections programs. She was invited three times to the White House to serve as Advisor for Strategic Planning for Higher Education in Criminal Justice Reform.

Stevens was invited to Harvard University to help their administration envision what higher education in prison could look like for their institution. In 2018, APAEP collaborated with the California Lawyers for the Arts and the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art to present the *Alabama Art for Justice Forum* to discuss the challenges and opportunities of improving participation and access to arts and education.

The fourth generation of her family to work in outreach at Auburn, Stevens was awarded the 2018 *Faculty Excellence in*

Outreach Award for her work as founder and director of APAEP. In 2016, she was acknowledged as both Southern Living's *Southerner of the Year* for the life-changing work she has accomplished in the state of Alabama and one

of AL.com's *Women Who Shaped the State*. Stevens received the Auburn University Young Alumni Achievement Award (2012) and Auburn University's Women of Distinction Award (2010), and she was an inaugural advisory board member for Emerging Arts Leaders of Alabama (2009).

The story of APAEP begins in 2001, when Kyes Stevens was awarded a fellowship grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Department of Justice to teach poetry at the Talladega Federal Prison. She traveled to California to train with the William James Association, and the poetry class began in September. "I knew within a month that I wanted to keep doing it," says Stevens. "I loved it." She

Photo: Courtesy of Kyes Stevens



Stevens tends to the gardens on her small farm.



Stevens with Rhoda, a beloved chicken.

taught another poetry class at Tutwiler Women's Facility through the *Aid to Inmate Mothers Program* in January 2002. Out of these experiences Stevens conceived the vision for the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project.

The Alabama Prison Arts Initiative first took hold in 2003 with funding from the NEA and was later renamed the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project. Fast-forward to 2019: APAEP has now served some 5,000 students through 6,624 classroom hours in 12 of Alabama's 15 major prisons. APAEP encompasses 243 pre-college and college classes in men's and women's facilities with expanded curriculum in the arts, humanities, sciences and math, utilizing more than 175 artists, writers, visiting teachers, graduate student fellows, and faculty members representing four universities in Alabama.

Reading libraries are established in 18 prisons and transitional facilities in Alabama, filled with 23,000 donated books. A touring exhibition, "Art on The Inside" composed of artwork by APAEP students has traveled to multiple states. Ten anthologies have been

published featuring the poetry, creative writing, and art by APAEP students.

Classes have been sustained through grants from more than 15 funding bodies and through numerous donations from individuals and sales of APAEP student-donated artwork. The B.S. degree has been made possible with support from the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Hearst Foundation. APAEP now has an administrative team led by Stevens that includes two program directors, an outreach coordinator and student interns.

Stevens leads with intelligence and innovation to move obstacles and barriers out of the way. She has developed strong relationships within the Alabama Department of Corrections (D.O.C.) on a bedrock of trust through honest, open communication and accountability. APAEP staff describe Stevens' integrity and leadership: "She makes you want to be better, to be the best version of yourself. She has the same interaction with someone who is incarcerated or with the D.O.C. She is always herself wherever she is, genuinely down-to-earth, fundamentally empathetic, incredibly perceptive and self-



Stevens, writing during a residency at Lillian E. Smith Residency.



Stevens with her wife Lisa Oberlander.

aware.” Family and friends note Stevens’ extraordinary ability to see potential and possibilities in people. “She is highly persistent in cultivating her vision for equity and access to education. She is driven, with focused intention, steadfast patience, and always with an open mind.”

“What I have learned from teaching poetry and literature in prisons...and for creating and growing the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project, is I love this state,” writes Kyes Stevens. “I believe unshakably, that we must take care of each other, even when it is a third and fourth chance. We invest in each other because of our common humanity. We must stop creating barriers for people who want to learn, at any point in their life. We must invest in our people.”

Barb Bondy is a visual artist

and professor of art at Auburn University.

*Since 2005, she has taught
a number of classes with APAEP.*

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Yvonne Wells

Stitching Stories

by Stacy Morgan

Yvonne Thomas Wells's route to her present stature as an acclaimed artist was far from typical. She did not enjoy an extensive formal education in the visual arts. Nor did she learn quilting at the knee of a relative during her childhood in the manner typical of folk traditions. Rather, Wells made her first quilt in 1979 for purely practical reasons: to help keep herself warm during the winter months. Because she enjoyed the creativity involved, Wells continued making quilts, many of which initially were variations on traditional quilt patterns such as the Dresden



Photo: Michael Leondas Kirkland

The Higginbothams II, 1989.



Wells at work.

Plate, Log Cabin, and Eight-Pointed Star. Then, circa 1985, Wells made the creative leap to begin fashioning large-scale pictorial story quilts and that artwork has remained her trademark ever since. Wells's artwork also became distinguished by her innovative incorporation of all manner of materials—such as items of used clothing, discarded flags, and



Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan

Me Masked II, 1993.

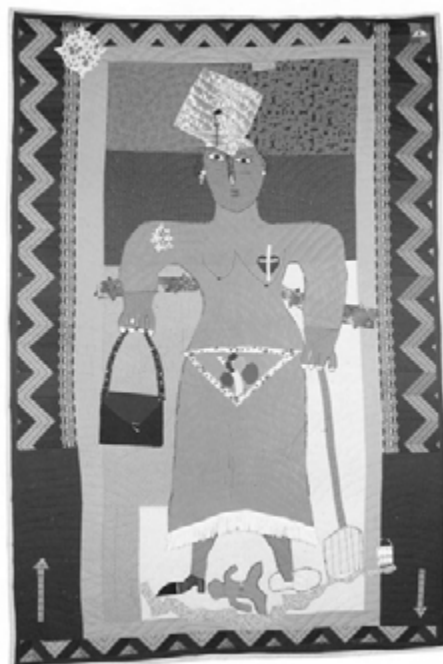


Seven Deadly Sins: Pride.

bottle caps—that are not part of conventional quilting traditions. As Wells explains, “anything I can stick a needle in” is fair game for inclusion in her quilts.

Nearly four decades before undertaking her first quilt, Wells was born to Reverend Peter Thomas, a Presbyterian minister, and Fannie Thomas, an elementary school teacher and a graduate of Alabama State. Tragically, Reverend Thomas passed away when Yvonne was just five years old, leaving Fannie to raise the couple’s eight surviving children by herself. After graduating from Druid High School in 1957, Yvonne stayed at home and cared for her mother, who was in poor health. Yvonne graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Health and Physical Education in 1964 from Stillman College, a school also attended by seven of her siblings. She later added a master’s degree in Adult Basic Education from Alabama State in 1975.

Yvonne married her husband, Livingston Wells, a First Sergeant in the Marines and Vietnam War veteran, in 1960. Yvonne and Livingston are the parents of DeWillican Wells Middleton (a Small Business Program Manager for the U.S. Department of Energy) and Mahijus Wells (a six-year veteran of the National Guard, a Maintenance Planner for Hunt Refining, and the husband of Michelle Wells, who is a Hydrologic Technician for the U.S. Geological Survey), and the proud grandparents of four grandchildren.



Woman I am, 2002.

Wells worked full-time as a physical education teacher in the Tuscaloosa city school system from 1965 to 2000, while also remaining an active member of Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church. Throughout her adult life, Wells has maintained an active record of community service with a special

emphasis on projects for children, veterans, and citizens in need. As Michigan art collector Kempf Hogan observes, “What I think is so wonderful about Yvonne, is that not only does she have this premier sense of creativity, but she’s a premier person in character.”



The Whole Armor of God I, 1995.

In the mid-1980s, Wells’s quilts caught the eye of Robert Cargo, a University of Alabama professor who operated the Cargo Folk Art Gallery in Tuscaloosa from 1984-2003. Cargo encouraged Yvonne to share her work with a broader audience. Entering the Kentucky Festival of the Arts in neighboring Northport for the first time in 1985, Wells received “Best of Show”—an award that she has gone on to win five more times.

Wells’s quilts soon captured the attention of art scholars, collectors, and curators and were included in national touring exhibitions that have spanned from *Stitching Memories: African-American Story Quilts* (1989-1991) to *From Heart to Hand: African American Quilts*

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan



Walk a Mile in My Shoes, 1987.

from the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts (2014-2018). Her artwork has reached mass audiences through a series of collaborations with Hallmark Cards, while also gracing such prestigious venues as the American Museum of Folk Art in New York City and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. In addition, Yvonne has represented Alabama in international exhibitions in Tokyo, Japan, Venice, France, and Pietrasanta, Italy.

It is a testament to the range of Yvonne's artwork that her quilts have been included in group exhibitions organized around such diverse themes as African American art, folk art, religious art, patriotic art, baseball, and the Civil Rights Movement.

Wells places her story quilts into the categories of Religious, Sociopolitical, Children's Moment,



Wells with her quilt, Yesterday Civil Rights in the South III, on exhibit at the Realizing a Dream event in Tuscaloosa, 1990.

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan

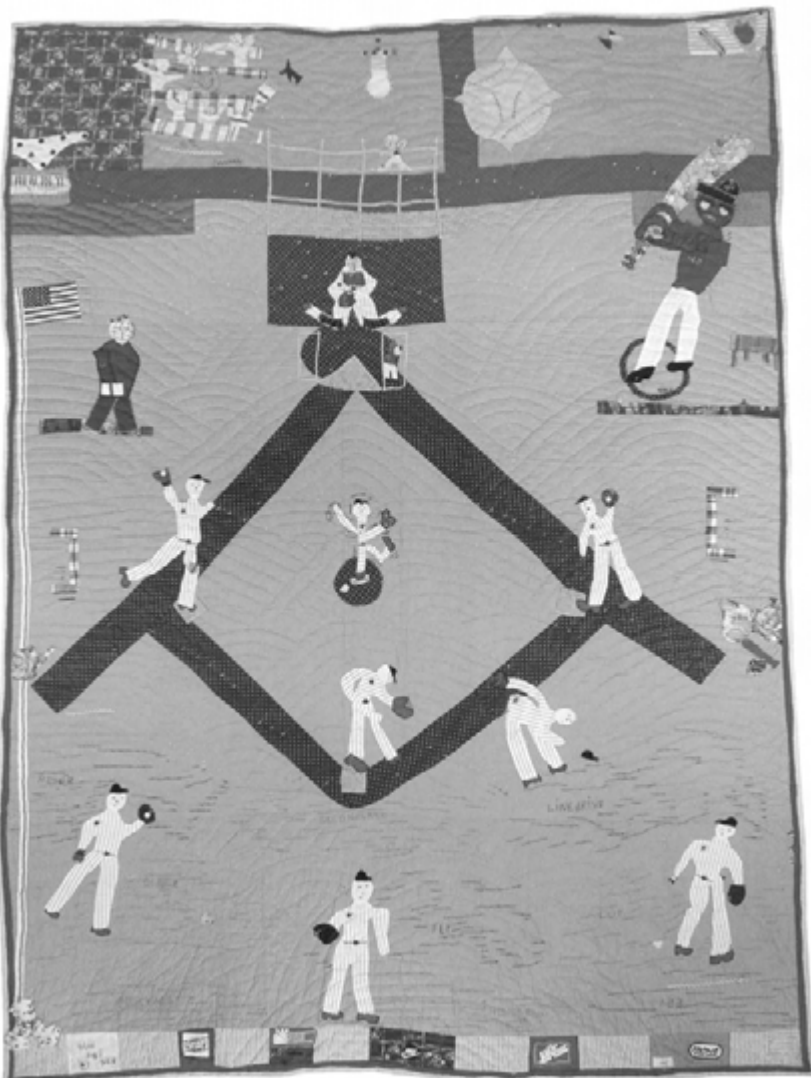
and Potluck. They range in tone from reverent to whimsical, and they push the boundaries of quilting as a visual art into a dynamic relationship with the performance art of storytelling. Yvonne's religious quilts reflect her lifelong membership in the Presbyterian Church and include beautiful representations of familiar Bible stories such as her "Creation" series, "Noah's Ark," and "Crucifixion," as well as pithy parables in quilt form such as "Proverbs," "The Whole Armor of God," and her "Seven Deadly Sins" series.



The Dream, 1993.

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan



The Great American Pastime: Homage to Jackie Robinson.

Many of Wells' sociopolitical quilts address the Civil Rights Movement, with a preponderance of subjects derived from events in Alabama. With her tributes to Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and numerous other less celebrated heroes and heroines of the movement, Wells provides a bold, unflinching representation of the violence and hatred that characterized that troubled chapter of U.S. history, while also consistently holding up the possibility of redemption through the committed collective action of the nation's citizens. Among Wells' most ambitious

sociopolitical projects is her "On the Move" series, which intertwines a broad sweep of black history from Africa through slavery to freedom with Biblical narratives.

Wells' "Children's Moment" quilts sometimes offer her own unique take on classic nursery rhymes such as "Humpty Dumpty" and "Little Miss Muffet," while others create entirely new scenarios from her own imagination. Wells has ensured that these quilts find their primary audience by exhibiting them at Tuscaloosa's Children's Hands-On Museum and various city schools, as well as attending "family day"



Me Masked I, 1993.

Photo: Courtesy of Albany Herald.

events at more conventional exhibition settings like the Montgomery Museum of Art.

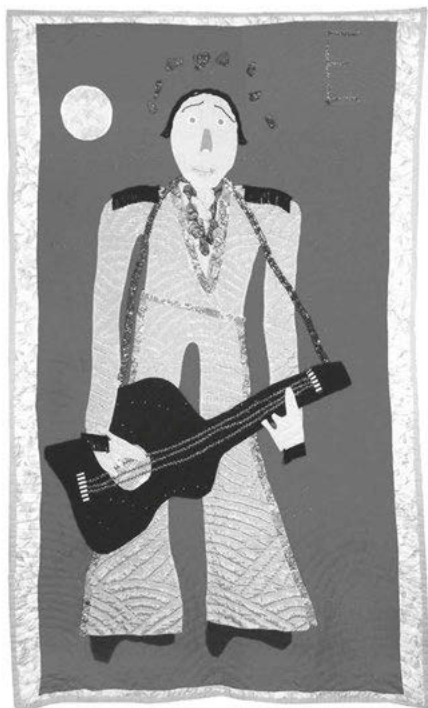
Wells reserves the potluck label for the vast number of her quilts that defy easy categorization. Some of these quilts stem from observations of everyday life, such as a barbershop tableau, portraits of animals, or scenes from nature. Others feature popular culture icons of yesteryear

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan



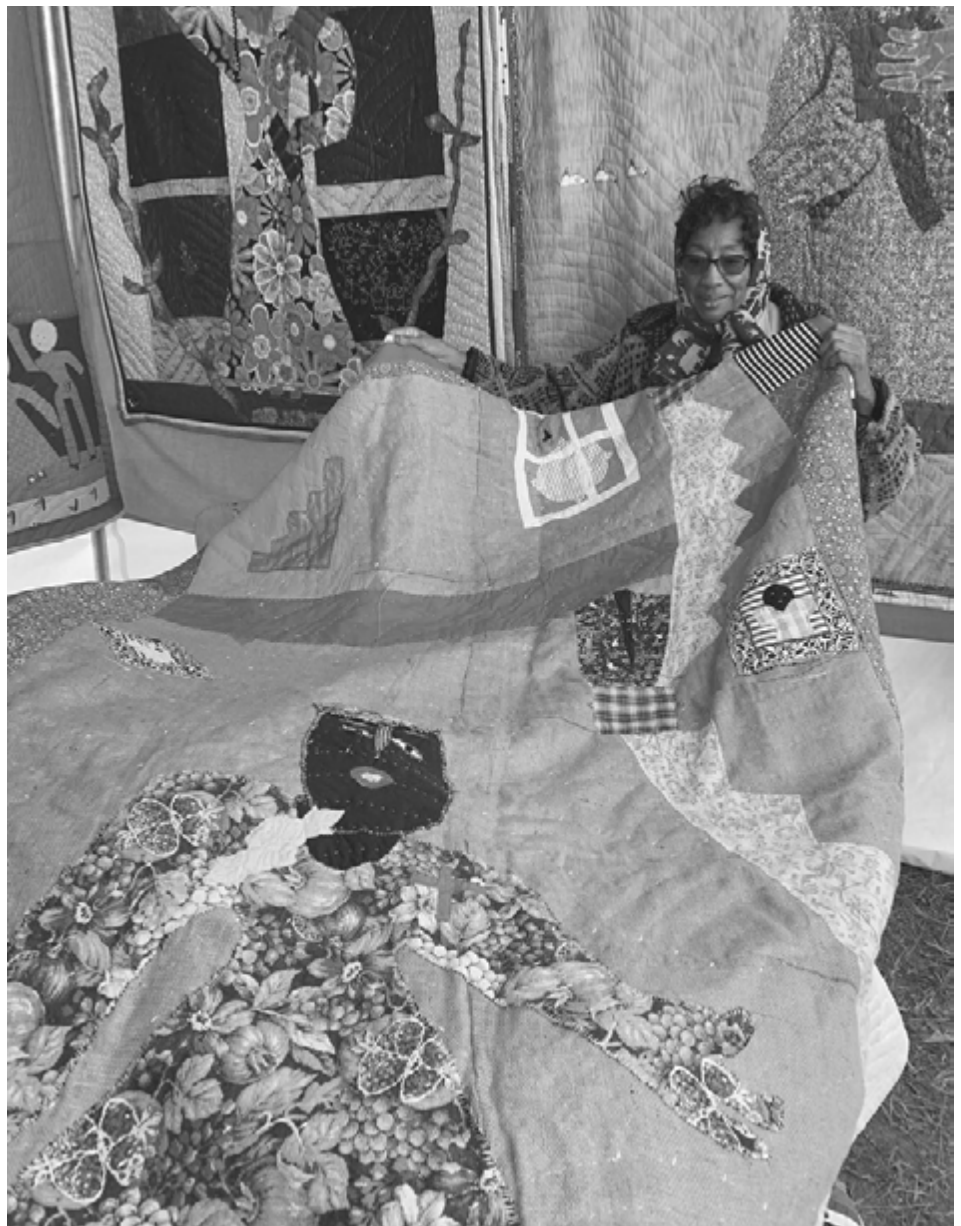
Lovers with a Broken Heart

such as Elvis Presley, Hank Williams, Marilyn Monroe, and Jackie Robinson, or more recent figures such as Michael Jackson, Danica Patrick, and Tiger Woods. Still other potluck quilts imaginatively render subjects such as the planets of the solar system, autobiographical masks rich with symbolism that speak to Wells's multifaceted identity, or even a rebus puzzle formed through assorted buttons from the sizable archive of materials that Wells has accumulated over the years.



Elvis, 1991.

Wells's other artistic legacy involves the many ways she has used her quilts as a means of giving back to her community. For instance, beginning in 1990, Wells' quilts served as backdrops for the first several years of the annual "Realizing the Dream" concerts co-sponsored by



Telling stories in cloth.

the local NAACP, Stillman College, and the University of Alabama. In this capacity, her civil rights-themed art featured prominently in local appearances by esteemed guest performers such as Sidney Poitier, James Earl Jones, Cicely Tyson, Harry Belafonte, and Della Reese.

Despite not having a direct connection to the AIDS epidemic herself, in 1993 Yvonne quilted a panel for the NAMES Project's AIDS Memorial quilt, which was incorporated into the larger tapestry

as part of a local ceremony held at the University of Alabama's Ferguson Student Center.

Following a tornado's devastation of Tuscaloosa in 2011, Wells created a quilt that was part of a local group exhibition based around the theme of post-storm recovery. In addition, she created a quilt that was reproduced in banner form and displayed outdoors as part of an additional project that aimed to bring grace notes of beauty and hope for renewal to the community's storm-

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan

Photo: Anna K. Smith

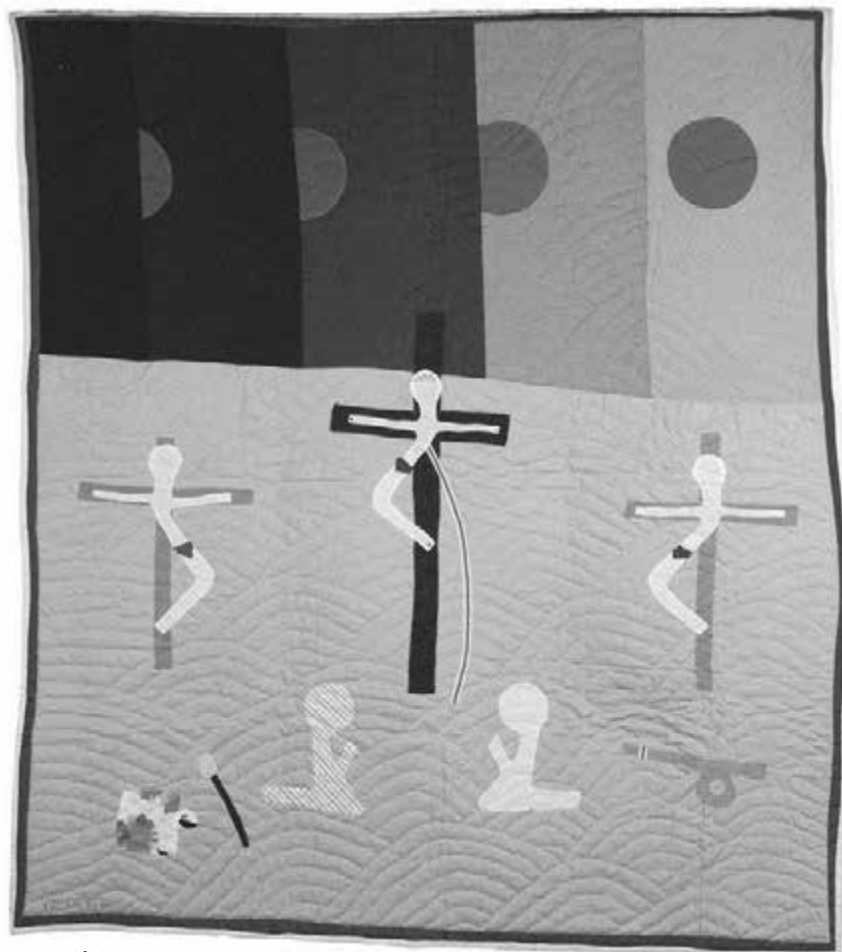
ravaged landscape.

Although she typically works alone on her story quilts, Wells also has employed her artistic talents to coordinate collaborative quilt projects in service to her community. In one such project from 2011, over thirty members of Brown Memorial Presbyterian contributed squares with embroidered texts, appliques, and photos of fellow members past and present that were joined into two large quilt panels to commemorate the church's 130th Anniversary.

Most recently, Wells guided four local artists in fashioning a quilt to celebrate the city of Tuscaloosa's 200th anniversary. Following in the vein of Wells' example, these local artists used applique techniques and non-traditional materials to craft a large map of Tuscaloosa and Northport that Yvonne then stitched together (along with several additional personal touches) into a finished work that encompasses a stunning array of local history sites and stories. This quilt was debuted to the public as part of a Tuscaloosa Bicentennial kick-off celebration in January 2019.

Never one to rest on her laurels, Wells continues to craft ambitious new work, extending a prolific career that now spans four decades and well over 500 quilts. Despite all of her accolades, Wells remains as appreciative as ever that her art continues to connect with audiences: "I still think what I'm doing is just 'plain old Yvonne.' And when somebody else sees my work, it touches my heart."

*Stacy Morgan is
a Professor of American Studies
at the University of Alabama.*



Crucifixion, 1986.

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan



Image still from video, Yvonne Wells: An Introduction.

Photo: Courtesy of Stacy Morgan

THE ALABAMA FOLK HERITAGE AWARD

Sudha Raghuram

Dancer, Teacher & Cultural Ambassador

by Anne Kimzey



Photo: Portrait Innovations

Sudha Raghuram performs Bharatanatyam, a classical dance of southern India.

Sudha Raghuram of Montgomery has been named the 19th recipient of the Alabama Folk Heritage Award from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, the state's highest honor for the folk and traditional arts. The award was established in 1988 to recognize master artists in the state who have made outstanding contributions and demonstrated long-term achievements in their particular artistic traditions.

Raghuram is the director of the Shivalaya School of Dance where she performs and teaches Bharatanatyam, a classical dance of southern India. This 2,000-year-old art

form is characterized by rhythmic footwork and precise hand gestures, eye movements, facial expressions (called “*abhinaya*”) and sculptural poses. Although it originated in southern India, the dance has become popular in all of India today and is also found in cities across the globe wherever there are large Indian communities.

The parents and students of the Shivalaya School of Dance nominated their respected guru (teacher) for the Heritage Award for her artistry and also for her important roles as a tradition bearer within the Indian community and cultural ambassador to the community at large. Shiny Marangoly of Montgomery, mother of student Kathryn, praised Raghuram for her extraordinary talent as a dancer, her technical knowledge, teaching ability and her dedication to promoting the art, adding, “There is no doubt that she plays a great role in this community for many

American-born Indian children, as well as other ethnicities, to have an opportunity to know many traditions and cultures of India.”

Raghuram was born in Bengaluru in the South Indian state of Karnataka. She began studying dance at the age of ten. “It was my father who introduced me to the dance form. His family is very artistic,” she explained. Her aunts were musicians and her late father, S.K. Suri, played guitar. “He would take me to dance performances and, as a young child, I was fascinated with this beautiful art. That’s when I started learning.”



Raghuram with her dance students during filming of APT's Journey Proud episode in 2015.

She remains grateful to her father, who passed away in 2011. "He initiated me into dance and was my main influence. I cannot forget his support and sacrifice that I should dance, which was, and is still, quite expensive to pursue in India and abroad." Her mother, Sulochana Suri, who still lives in Bengaluru, was also an important influence as she was learning to dance. "She supported me unconditionally," said Raghuram.

In her early career, Raghuram studied Bharatanatyam under Guru B. K. Vasanthalakshmi of the Kalakshetra School. After five years of training, Raghuram performed her "Arangetram," a



Students Aisha Roughton and Suraiya Begum perform with Raghuram at a 2018 Diwali cultural program in Montgomery.

Photo: Courtesy of Sudha Raghuram

formal solo dance debut, which is a rite of passage for a young dancer and a first step toward a professional career. She later received intensive training for several years under Guru Vasantha Vedam. As an advanced student, Raghuram grew into a polished performer under the guidance of Guru Lalitha Srinivasan director of the acclaimed Nupura school of dance in Bengaluru. As a member of the Nupura school, Raghuram participated in dance ballets based on mythological and historical themes and performed in leading roles on many stages throughout India until her move to the United States in 1990.

That year, she and her husband Raghuram Nangatur were married and three months later the couple left India and moved to Montgomery for his job as a software consultant. Sudha, who has a Master's



The Journey Proud television crew films Raghuram instructing dance students on hand gestures.

degree in Social Work, is employed as a Financial Support Case Manager for the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

After their move to Alabama, Raghuram began teaching dance to children in the Indian community in Montgomery. Before long her reputation as a teacher and performer brought her to the attention of the Alabama State Council on the Arts and she was selected as a master artist in the Alabama Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. This competitive grants program provides support to folk and traditional artists in Alabama in passing on their traditions to a new generation of students, with the goal of preserving and perpetuating important cultural traditions in the state.

In 1994, the couple and their young son Rohan moved to Wilmington, North Carolina. During the four years they were in the state, Raghuram continued to teach dance and was selected by the North Carolina Arts Council for their Touring Artists directory. She and her students had the opportunity to perform at festivals in Fayetteville, Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Wilmington.

When the family returned to Montgomery, Raghuram resumed teaching and soon founded the



Photo: Joey Brackner

Raghuram instructs an advanced student.

Shivalaya School of Dance in 2000. Since that time she has trained dozens of girls in the ancient, exacting and beautiful art of Bharatanatyam. She explained that “most dances are about Hindu mythology. They are stories about

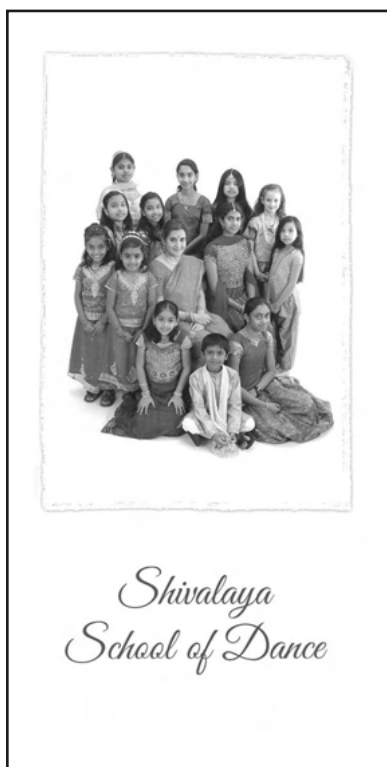


Photo: Joey Brackner

Raghuram teaches fundamentals of Bharatanatyam to her younger students.



Raghuram watches her advanced students practice during filming of a Journey Proud TV episode.



Raghuram in Bengaluru, India in 1998.

Indian gods, but there are also dances which are about nature and also the relationship between a man and a woman or between a mother and a child.” For Raghuram and her students, passing on this dance tradition serves several important purposes, including maintaining and celebrating their cultural identity.

“It is giving them an opportunity to learn this art form and I think it’s a real good way for them to learn



Raghuram performs at the annual recital of the Shivalaya School of Dance, 2017



Raghuram performing Kathak, a dance form of northern India at the Birmingham Museum of Art, 2014.

about their heritage because most of my students are children of Indian parents. Since these girls are all born and brought up here, they really do not have a very good knowledge about the culture in India or their heritage and this is a good way to make them more knowledgeable about our heritage,” she said. “They also have an opportunity to perform on the stage, so this gives them a lot of confidence. It really improves their self-esteem and they feel very proud about their culture.”

The State Arts Council also awarded Raghuram an Individual Artist Fellowship in Dance in 2014. Artist Fellowships recognize outstanding artistic achievement in an art form and are intended to help advance an artist’s career. In 2013 and 2014, she was selected for the Alabama Touring Artists Program to present Bharatanatyam and other Indian dances in schools and classrooms across Alabama.

In 2015, the Shivalaya School of Dance was featured in a 30-minute documentary series produced by Alabama Public Television called *Journey Proud*. In this program, the viewers meet Raghuram and her students and watch them prepare for and perform a dance drama she choreographed, which is an adaptation of Cinderella featuring

Bharatanatyam danced to fusion music. This episode, titled “Classical Dance of India,” can be viewed online at the journeyproudalabama.com.

She has maintained a close relationship with her teacher Lalitha Srinivasan and when Raghuram returns to India on annual visits, she continues to study with her guru to learn new dances that she then shares with her students and audiences in Alabama. She has expanded from Bharatanatyam to learn Kathak, a classical dance of northern India. She also has learned and taught a number of semi-classical and folk dances of India.

In 2006, Raghuram was able to bring Lalitha Srinivasan’s troupe to the U.S. to perform a recital at the Leila Bartow Theater in Tullibody Hall at Alabama State University and to tour the Southeast. Raghuram recalled, “I had the opportunity to perform with the troupe in the different cities in the United States in



A photo from the 2007 exhibition Carry On, which documented master artists in the Alabama Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program.



Raghuram performs at an event commemorating the 40th anniversary of her dance teacher Lalitha Srinivasan's Nupura dance school in Bengaluru, India in 2018.

Augusta, Atlanta, and Birmingham. This was a very good opportunity since we performed for the American and also the Indian audience. I was able to sponsor her workshop in Montgomery and she was able to teach a few of my students. And this was possible with the grant that I received from the State Council on the Arts.” About that time, Raghuram also returned to India to perform at the 25th anniversary of the Nupura dance school. In December 2018, the Nupura School reached another milestone and Raghuram and her student Aisha Roughton performed in Bengaluru during the 40th anniversary celebrations.

Raghuram is recognized by her community and by many arts organizations in the state as a tireless advocate of Indian Classical Dance. “Mrs. Raghuram is a very passionate and dedicated artist,” said Dr. Malathi Ginjupalli. “Many of her students performed solo recitals and group

dances choreographed by her for programs organized by the Indian Cultural Associations in Montgomery, Auburn and Birmingham.” Raghuram and her students are not only invited to perform at cultural celebrations, such as Diwali and Holi, but they also perform at Indian weddings and at many multi-cultural festivals and other public events around the state. Raghuram has often expressed her desire to preserve this ancient dance form for the next generation and also to share the beautiful, culturally emblematic art of Bharatanatyam with mainstream audiences in Alabama.

*Anne Kimzey is a Folklorist
and the Literary Arts Program Manager
for the Alabama State Council on the Arts*

THE ALBERT B. HEAD COUNCIL LEGACY AWARD

Tommy Battle

A Visionary Leader

by Allison Dillon-Jauken

Early in his second term as Mayor of Huntsville, Tommy Battle engaged a new urban and long-range planner to help the community set its course for future growth and development. Today, Huntsville's master plan is aptly titled "The Big Picture," and it is a reflection of both the Huntsville community and the visionary, inclusive Mayor who leads the North Alabama city *US News & World Report* ranks as one of the top ten cities to live in the nation.

Mayor Battle is truly a big picture leader who understands the interplay of economic development, education, neighborhoods, public safety, transportation, parks, greenways, arts, entertainment and culture. While the City of Huntsville has prospered under his leadership since 2008—adding over 24,000 new jobs, building \$500 million new roads, investing \$250 million in new schools while generating \$4 billion in economic investment—the arts, entertainment and cultural sector has also thrived through new grant programs, public art initiatives, capital investment, increased vibrancy and a commitment to Huntsville's maker culture.

As he speaks to groups across Huntsville, Mayor Battle frequently cites creativity and innovation as keys to Huntsville's continued success—the creativity and innovation that is found in the arts, aerospace, biotech or any number of other sectors across the city. Mayor Battle's commitment to the arts and his understanding of the impact of our sector from education to economic development makes him a true champion of the arts. As the Alabama State Council on the Arts presents its

2019 Legacy Award to Mayor Battle, artists from North Alabama and across the state can celebrate knowing that he will continue to advance our status and advocate for our work because of his intrinsic belief in the value of the arts.



Huntsville artist Chris Wade joins Mayor Battle to unveil Wade's artwork for Panoply 2019 celebrating the festival and the 50th anniversary of the Apollo lunar landing.

Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.

Mayor Battle's values are Alabama born and bred. He was raised in Birmingham by Tom and Bess Battle and graduated from Berry High School. As a young teenager, he worked in his dad's restaurant as a "bus boy's assistant," but later his summers were spent in the Mobile shipyards and Birmingham furnaces earning money for college.

After receiving his business degree from the University of Alabama, he returned to Birmingham to work alongside his father as manager of Britling Cafeteria



Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.

Huntsville has “Space to innovate.” Mayor Battle grabs a shovel to break ground on the \$200 million Blue Origin rocket engine production facility.

on the Highland. Those who know Mayor Battle well can see his customer service background in his daily interactions: his compassion for others and his consideration for employees across Huntsville—from those in the hospitality sector to healthcare, education to aerospace, or advanced manufacturing to the arts.

In 1980, Battle moved to Huntsville and was elected to the City Council in 1984. He served as the Council’s Finance Chair until 1988, when he left elected office and launched Battle Real Estate. Over the next two decades, his work as a real estate developer and entrepreneur gave him a unique perspective on Huntsville’s challenges and opportunities.

In 2008, Battle was elected to his first term as Mayor of Huntsville. His tenure has been marked by teamwork—teamwork across companies and industries, cities and county lines. As a result of his inclusive, team approach, the Huntsville metro area has experienced unprecedented job growth and consistently makes the “Best Of” lists from *Forbes*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *WalletHub*, *Business Insider*,

Livability, *NerdWallet*, *Bloomberg* and others.

Landing a spot on everyone’s “Best Of” lists takes a big picture leader like Battle—a leader who is looking for



Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.

Mayor Battle speaks at the unveiling the USPS Alabama Commemorative Forever Stamp at EarlyWorks Children’s History Museum in downtown Huntsville, in honor of the Alabama Bicentennial.

the best economic development partners for Huntsville, not just the first partners to say “yes.” For Battle and his administration, this means businesses that will partner with the community and continue to invest in all aspects of Huntsville—including the arts. Thankfully, Battle leads by example.

Early in his first term as Mayor, Battle endorsed the creation of the biennial SPACES Sculpture Trail, a joint project by Arts Huntsville, Alabama A&M University, Huntsville Museum of Art, Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment and UAH to expand public art in the community. Featuring 24 sculptures from visiting artists across the community in its first iteration, SPACES has now grown to include Ditto Landing and the City of Madison and feature nearly 40 sculptures.

Based on the community impact of the SPACES Sculpture Trail, Battle e-mailed Arts Huntsville in December 2011 with a link to the National Endowment for the Arts’ Our Town grant application; Battle identified the Our Town program as a way to fund development of a public art plan for Huntsville. With the city’s support, Arts Huntsville was one of only 80 Our Town grants awarded in the 2012 funding cycle, and the grant led to development of the Huntsville Public Art Plan. The NEA funding also provided additional support for Huntsville’s first site-specific public art commission in over 25 years—Birmingham artist Chris Fennell’s “Light Tree” and “Light Arch” at The Avenue on Jefferson

Street in downtown Huntsville (funded through a public-private partnership between the City of Huntsville, Sealy Property Development, and Arts Huntsville). Today,



Welcome to the neighborhood. Mayor Battle announces Huntsville will become a Gig City with the partner Google Fiber in February 2016.

Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.



Students from Lakewood Elementary School get in step with Mayor Battle, Councilman Devyn Keith and City Attorney Trey Riley as part of the Mayor’s annual Healthy Huntsville initiative. Photo: Courtesy of Mayor Battle



Mayor Battle celebrating the grand opening of Huntsville’s state-of-the-art Aquatics Center in 2017.

Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.



Mayor Battle joins area fifth graders and Alabama teaching artist John Scalici in a drum circle in Huntsville's Big Spring Park in 2012.



Ceramicist Gokden Alpman Matthews welcomes Mayor Battle to her studio at Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment, the largest privately owned arts facility in the U.S.

public art continues to develop across Huntsville—from murals to temporary installations to site-specific commissions, including the current public/private \$630,000 CityCentre project in the heart of downtown.

Battle's support of the arts extends far beyond public art. In 2012, Huntsville joined the ranks of thousands of communities across the nation when the Mayor, with the support of the City Council, created a new appropriation to support the Huntsville Arts & Cultural Grant Program—a competitive grant program managed by Arts Huntsville that supports Huntsville-based non-profit arts and cultural organizations not already funded through the city's annual budget.

Now in its seventh year of grantmaking, the Huntsville Arts & Cultural Grant Program has helped to reinforce the arts community's commitment to artistic excellence while also helping to build organizational capacity through this critical funding. (For many Huntsville Arts & Grant recipients, this funding was the first city support they had received in over five decades of programming.) Mayor Battle's vision and continued support for this initiative, which funds between 15 and 18 arts organizations annually as determined by a community grant panel, is testament to his understanding of the broad-based impact of the arts across our city. The impact of the arts in Huntsville extends to our vibrant and growing music scene, and under Mayor Battle's leadership the city engaged London-based firm Sound Diplomacy in 2018 to conduct a music industry assessment and audit to position our



Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.

Mayor Battle greets Toyota and Mazda executives in Montgomery, AL prior to the news conference to announce the companies joint venture in Huntsville.

local musicians and music sector for future growth and development.

Since being elected as Mayor in 2008, Mayor Battle has also encouraged city investments in capital projects for arts and cultural projects across Huntsville: the Huntsville Museum of Art expansion in 2010, expansions at Burritt on the Mountain and Huntsville Botanical Garden, the current construction of the Von Braun's Center's new Music Hall, and the city's recent plans to move forward with designs for a new \$40 million state-of-the-art amphitheater in a new city park at Huntsville's Mid-City mixed-use development project. Since 1999, Huntsville's performing arts community has also conducted needs assessments and feasibility studies for new performance spaces, but it was Mayor Battle who—as part of the redevelopment of the former Grissom High School—developed plans to transform the complex into a model of adaptive reuse, resulting in Arts Huntsville and the City of Huntsville's second NEA Our Town creative placemaking grant award. In 2020, the new “Moon Community Complex” and Performance Center will feature arts administration offices, choral and band rehearsal spaces and a proscenium auditorium for arts organizations, and the campus—also home to a new Huntsville/Madison County Public Library Branch and City of Huntsville Department of Parks and Recreation facilities—will feature walking trails, festival lawns and greenspace.

As Mayor Battle works for Huntsville's future, we

know that our arts community will continue to thrive because support of local arts and culture is a core principal in the city's Big Picture Master Plan. Through community input and the leadership of Mayor Battle, the City Council and his administration, Huntsville's “Big Picture” calls for support of the city's “distinct character, including a rich maker heritage, a thriving arts scene...and unique neighborhoods” and, more specifically, “areas within the



Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.

A pivotal moment for Huntsville and Alabama industry. Mayor Battle and Alabama Department of Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield look on as executives from Toyota and Mazda announces they will build a \$1.6 billion manufacturing facility in Huntsville.



Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Mayor, City of Huntsville.

Mayor Battle with his family in Huntsville's Big Spring Park. From left to right, Eula Battle, Mayor Tommy Battle, son Drew Battle, daughter-in-law Lauren Battle, and grandson George. Not pictured, grandson Benjamin Battle, born in January 2019.

community for residents to see and engage local art." Mayor Battle has proven he understands how arts, entertainment and culture impact the big picture, and he supports all the elements needed to bring that picture into focus. As he raises the bar for the arts in Huntsville, he champions arts, entertainment and culture across the State of Alabama.

*Allison Dillon-Jauken is the
Executive Director of Arts Huntsville
overseeing its four core program areas:
arts community promotion
and support, arts education,
public art and community events.*

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